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LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Currently amended) A vehicle occupant detection apparatus comprising: a control apparatus, and at least one load sensor for generating load data concerning a vehicle seat, said control apparatus comprising

a processing section for judging vehicle occupant status based upon said load data,

a power supply section for supplying electrical power to said processing section, and

a communication section for transmitting results of said judgement of vehicle occupant status by said processing section to a vehicle occupant protection apparatus;

wherein said load sensor is supplied with electrical power from said power supply section of said control apparatus, and said control apparatus further comprises at least one connecting lead for supplying the electrical power from said power supply section to said load sensor independently of the supplying of electrical power to said processing section.

2. (Original) A vehicle occupant detection apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein said load sensor produces said load data in the form of an analog voltage signal, and said control apparatus

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comprises analog-to-digital converter means for converting said analog voltage signal to digital data.

3. (Original) A vehicle occupant detection apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein said processing section of said control apparatus performs encoding of said results of said judgement of vehicle occupant status, and wherein resultant encoded data are transmitted by said communication section to said vehicle occupant protection apparatus.
4. (New) A vehicle occupant detection apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the vehicle occupant status is one of empty, child and adult.
5. (New) A vehicle occupant detection apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the processing section indicates failure data.
6. (New) A vehicle occupant detection apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the load sensor produces a signal having a level proportional to a strain produced by an occupant of the vehicle.
7. (New) A vehicle occupant detection apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the processing section is configured to facilitate obtaining a weight value representative of a weight of an occupant responsive to said load data, and checking whether the weight value exceeds at least one threshold value to

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determine whether a corresponding value for the vehicle occupant status.

8. (New) A vehicle occupant detection apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the results are transmitted as a serial data stream.

9. (New) A vehicle occupant detection apparatus comprising: a control apparatus, and at least one load sensor for generating load data concerning a vehicle seat, said control apparatus comprising

a processing section for judging vehicle occupant status based upon said load data,

a power supply section for supplying electrical power to said processing section, and

a communication section for transmitting results of said judgement of vehicle occupant status by said processing section to a vehicle occupant protection apparatus;

wherein said load sensor is supplied with electrical power from said power supply section of said control apparatus, and said control apparatus further comprises at least one connecting lead for supplying the electrical power from said power supply section to said load sensor independently of the supplying of electrical power to said processing section;

wherein said load sensor produces said load data in the form of an analog voltage signal, and said control apparatus

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comprises analog-to-digital converter means for converting said analog voltage signal to digital data;

wherein said processing section of said control apparatus performs encoding of said results of said judgement of vehicle occupant status; and

wherein resultant encoded data are transmitted by said communication section to said vehicle occupant protection apparatus.

10. (New) A vehicle occupant detection apparatus as claimed in claim 9, wherein the vehicle occupant status is one of empty, child and adult.

11. (New) A vehicle occupant detection apparatus as claimed in claim 9, wherein the processing section indicates failure data.

12. (New) A vehicle occupant detection apparatus as claimed in claim 9, wherein the load sensor produces a signal having a level proportional to a strain produced by an occupant of the vehicle.

13. (New) A vehicle occupant detection apparatus as claimed in claim 9, wherein the processing section is configured to facilitate obtaining a weight value representative of a weight of an occupant responsive to said load data, and checking whether the weight value exceeds at least one threshold value to

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determine whether a corresponding value for the vehicle occupant status.

14. (New) A vehicle occupant detection apparatus as claimed in claim 9, wherein the results are transmitted as a serial data stream.